

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF  
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 16, 2011 in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

**2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Polcari.

**3. ROLL CALL**

Present: Commissioners Gibson, Polcari, Rizzo, Uchima, Weideman, Skoll and Chairperson Horwich.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Planning Assistant Graham, Planning Assistant Martos, Sr. Planning Associate Chun, Plans Examiner Noh, Associate Civil Engineer Symons, Sr. Fire Prevention Specialist Kazandjian and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

**4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA**

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on Thursday, March 10, 2011.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of the February 2, 2011 minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous voice vote.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Skoll moved for the approval of the February 16, 2011 minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous voice vote, with Commissioner Gibson abstaining.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Polcari moved for the approval of the March 2, 2011 minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous voice vote.

**6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.**

**7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS # 1**

**7A.** Planning Associate Kevin Joe announced that beginning on March 31, 2011, a certified farmers' market will be held in Downtown Torrance every Thursday from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. on El Prado Avenue between Sartori Avenue and Plaza del Prado.

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Chairperson Horwich reviewed the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

**8. TIME EXTENSIONS** – None.

**9. CONTINUED HEARINGS** – None.

**10. WAIVERS** – None.

**11. FORMAL HEARINGS**

**11A. DIV11-00002: CONTINENTAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (TORRANCE HEALTH ASSOCIATION)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Division of Lot to consolidate four parcels into two on properties located in the M-2 Zone at 2841-2841 Lomita Boulevard and 23600 Telo Avenue.

**Recommendation:** Approval.

Planning Assistant Graham introduced the request.

Alex Rose, representing Continental Development Corporation, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

In response to Commissioner Skoll's inquiry, Mr. Rose provided clarification regarding on-site circulation and related his belief that the project would not significantly add to traffic on Telo Avenue.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Commissioner Skoll expressed support for the project.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Skoll moved to approve DIV11-00002, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Assistant Graham read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-015.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Skoll moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-015. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**11B. MOD11-00002: CHARLES BELAK-BERGER (RAJU CHHABRIA)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Modification of previously approved entitlements (CUP08-00015, DIV08-00006, DVP08-00002, WAV08-00005) to allow reductions of square footage and scope to the original project on properties located in the H-PCH Zone at 3720 and 3744 Pacific Coast Highway and APN 7534-001-901.

**Recommendation:** Approval.

Planning Assistant Graham introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of a revised resolution and code requirements.

Commissioner Weideman noted that he voted in favor of a Negative Declaration when this project was originally approved by the Commission in November 2008 because the applicant was required to widen the street and construct a right-turn only lane on Hawthorne Boulevard to mitigate traffic impact and questioned whether the project's environmental impact should be re-examined since this no longer will be required.

Planning Manager Lodan explained that the Transportation Division reviewed the revised project and determined that there was no longer a nexus to require such a significant public improvement due to the reduction in square footage and that another environmental assessment was not necessary since the revised project will have less of an impact than was assessed by the prior Initial Study (EAS08-00003). He noted that the applicant will be required to dedicate property for the right-turn lane and the City hopes to use Measure R funding to construct it.

Charles Belak-Berger, project architect, briefly reviewed the revisions to the project. He noted that almost 6,000 square feet have been eliminated, including the second floor of Building C, and that the subterranean parking has also been eliminated and the on-site circulation has been redesigned to discourage cut-through traffic. He voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

In response to Commissioner Skoll's inquiry, Mr. Belak-Berger reported that Building A will have retail uses on the first floor with offices on the second floor; that Building B will be entirely retail uses; and that Building C will likely be restaurant/food uses.

Commissioner Skoll asked if the bus stop on PCH could be moved because it appears to interfere with the flow of traffic. Planning Manager Lodan advised that the final location of the bus stop will be reviewed by the Transit Department and it will also be reviewed by the MTA if the bus stop is used by that agency.

In response to Chairperson Horwich's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan confirmed that there is sufficient parking to allow Building C to be used entirely for food uses.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous voice vote.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Skoll moved to approve MOD11-00002, including conditions as revised in the supplemental material, and all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Weideman stated that while he would accept Planning staff's determination that no additional environmental review was necessary, he was disturbed that the street improvements on which his vote to approve a Negative Declaration was predicated have been eliminated from the project. He related his belief that it was important that this corner be cleaned up due to its location at a major gateway to Torrance.

Commissioner Gibson noted her concurrence with Commissioner Weideman's remarks.

Planning Assistant Graham read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-020.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Skoll moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-020 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**11C. CUP11-00005: DEAN REUTER (RICK THOMAS)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow an existing 27,000 square-foot industrial tenant space to be converted to a church with 5,245 square feet of sanctuary area within an industrial park on property located within the Industrial Redevelopment Project Area at 501 Van Ness Avenue.

**Recommendation:** Approval.

Planning Assistant Graham introduced the request and noted supplemental material available at the meeting consisting of an added condition and two deleted code requirements.

Dean Reuter, representing Lighthouse Community Church, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

Commissioner Rizzo questioned whether the church would be operating food or clothing banks.

Pastor Kim Kira, Lighthouse Community Church, stated that the church will not be operating community outreach programs on the premises. He provided background information about the church, noting that it was founded eight years ago and has been holding services at Torrance High, but was now ready for a permanent home.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rizzo and passed by unanimous voice vote.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Uchima moved to approve CUP11-00005, as conditioned, including the condition in the supplemental material, and all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Assistant Graham read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-021.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Uchima moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-021 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**11D. MOD11-00003: MAX SCHLUTZ (STEVEN TORRES)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Modification of a previously approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP09-00025) to allow for modifications to the hours of operation of a full-service restaurant with the service of alcoholic beverages on property located within the Commercial Sector of the Downtown Redevelopment Project Area at 1321 Sartori Avenue.

**Recommendation:** Approval.

Sr. Planning Associate Chun introduced the request and noted supplemental material available at the meeting consisting of a revised Condition No. 5.

Max Schlutz, representing 1321 Downtown Taproom Bistro, 1321 Sartori Avenue, reported that the restaurant would like to modify its hours of operation from Monday through Thursday 11:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 11:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. and Sunday 11:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. to Monday through Thursday 11:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.; Friday 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m.; Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m.; and Sunday 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. He explained that opening earlier on the weekend will allow the restaurant to serve breakfast and staying open an hour later will provide more flexibility. He emphasized that he plans to do everything possible to ensure that neighbors are not disturbed by the restaurant as they are key to its success.

Michael Shafer, owner of The Depot and Buffalo Fire Department restaurants, voiced support for the extended hours of operation.

Commissioner Weideman noted that Mr. Shafer's restaurants close at 10:00 p.m. Mr. Shafer explained that his liquor license allows him to stay open until midnight at both locations, but there is not enough demand to warrant it, however, he hopes to be able to extend his hours as traffic increases in the downtown area.

Chairperson Horwich recalled that there were some concerns about the hours of operation when this project was originally approved.

Planning Assistant Martos advised that the operating hours set forth in the original Resolution were volunteered by the applicant; that residents who were present at the hearing were primarily concerned about the outdoor seating due to the potential for noise; and that this was no longer a concern because the outdoor seating has been eliminated.

Commissioner Gibson asked about the opening time approved for Tortilla Cantina on Saturdays and Sundays.

Mr. Shafer stated that he was at the hearing for Tortilla Cantina and recalled that the applicant originally wanted to open at 8:00 a.m. but agreed to a 9:00 a.m. opening time as a compromise.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rizzo and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Weideman moved to approve MOD11-00003, as conditioned, including the revisions to Condition No. 5 (supplemental material), and all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Sr. Planning Associate Chun read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-022.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Weideman moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-022, as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

## **12. RESOLUTIONS**

### **12A. WAV11-00002: CHRIST OUR SAVIOR ANGLICAN CHURCH**

Planning Commission adoption of a resolution reflecting their decision to approve a Waiver of the required setbacks on property located in the C-1 Zone at 1108 Sartori Avenue.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Polcari moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-016. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by a 6-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Rizzo dissenting.

## **13. PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS – None.**

## **14. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

### **14A. TRANSFER OF PROPERTY FROM THE TORRANCE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY TO THE CITY OF TORRANCE**

Planning Commission review and consideration of whether the transfer of 14 properties by the Torrance Redevelopment Agency to the City of Torrance is in compliance with the City's General Plan.

Planning Manager Lodan introduced the request.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan reported that the 14 properties were transferred from the Torrance Redevelopment Agency to the City of Torrance as of last Wednesday, March 9, and the Commission was being asked to confirm that each property conforms with Torrance's General Plan.

In response to Commissioner Weideman's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan provided clarification regarding the Commercial Center General Plan Land Use Designation. He advised that the Commercial Center designation allows for higher density residential developments, as well as mixed-use commercial/residential developments, so the senior housing development at 1421 Cravens Avenue conforms to this designation.

Commissioner Weideman asked about Parcel #7352-022-900, which appears to be in the middle of the American Honda campus, and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan explained that Honda excluded this parcel due to potential contamination issues.

Commissioner Weideman expressed concerns that this was a blatantly political action. Noting that the transfer was meant to prevent Sacramento from taking control of the subject properties, he stated that while he tends to agree that local control is better, he was dismayed that the Commission was being asked to "bless" the transfer after the fact.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan advised that typically this item would have been presented to the Commission before the Council took action on the transfer, but it could not be done that way in this case due to the timelines involved. He explained that the action was necessary to protect the City's assets, noting the potential ramifications should the State take over the senior housing project or City-owned parking lots in the downtown area that are leased by nearby restaurants.

Commissioner Gibson stated that she agrees with the Council's action, but was concerned about the ethics of approving the transfer after the fact.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan clarified that the Commission was only being asked to confirm that the conveyance of the properties was in conformance with the City's General Plan.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Skoll moved to find that the conveyance of the 14 properties from the Torrance Redevelopment Agency to the City of Torrance was in conformance with Torrance's General Plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by a 6-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Weideman dissenting.

Commenting on his vote, Chairperson Horwich stated that he agreed that this was a blatantly political action, however, he supports it because he does not want the State to take over City property.

## **15. REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS**

Discussed under Item 14A.

## **16. LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES**

Planning Manager Lodan reviewed the agenda for the April 6, 2011 Planning Commissioner meeting.

**17. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2**

**17A.** Assistant City Attorney Sullivan reported that with regard to the Walmart lawsuit, the judge found that the City had followed proper procedures and there was no requirement that traffic or environmental studies be conducted in conjunction with the Walmart project on Hawthorne Boulevard, therefore the project will be moving forward.

**17B.** In response to Commissioner Uchima's inquiry, Assistant City Attorney Sullivan provided clarification regarding the filing of Form 700.

**17C.** Commissioner Gibson requested an excused absence for the April 6, 2011 Planning Commission meeting.

Commissioner Weideman, seconded by Commissioner Uchima, so moved; and voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

**17D.** Commissioner Skoll noted that he attended his first meeting as a member of the ExxonMobil Community Advisory Panel earlier this evening and it appears that the meetings will not conflict with Planning Commission meetings.

**18. ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:19 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, April 6, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Submitted April 20, 2011 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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